



## Hyperstitions and the Cult of Steered Progress

### Description

*Hyperstitions — the ability of humans to create their own future. But is this one genie we don't want to let out of the bottle?*

There is a word that has buzzed for years through futurism circles: hyperstition. The definition of which is roughly as follows: as superstitions are irrational fictions that humans create around things from latent fears or misunderstanding, hyperstitions are the logical extensions of that. They are preconceptions about the future, which are 'self-fulfilling'; fictions that become reality, simply because we have subconsciously driven them into life by way of imagining them.

But a disturbing trend has seen futurists using hyperstitional thought to advocate taking up the mantle as humanity's saviors, in envisioning a 'better world for all of us'.

[In this article](#), futurist Jorge Camacho does a good job in outlining the idea of hyperstitions within the frameworks of futurism. But what struck me was the immediate re-orienting of the concept towards finding ways by which, essentially, the intelligentsia class can 'utilize' and 'harness' the power of hyperstitions in order to steer the future towards a desirable path. And what is desirable, one wonders? Desirable by whom, exactly? All the usual progressive catchwords can likely be interposed: egalitarianism, protecting the marginalized and disadvantaged underclasses, and things of this nature.

But it brings us to the broader problem, illumined below, inherent to all the influence/policy classes which lord over the common prole/plebe, be they the intelligentsia, the ruling class, or whatever moniker you deem to confer them with.

Camacho develops the previous idea by referencing futurist Fred Polak's magnum opus *The Image of the Future*:

*In this context, Polak suggests an exciting possibility. The introduction of the image of the future into the **social sciences** may achieve more than just extending the diagnostic toolkit*

*of the discipline. “The formulation and description of images of the future,” Polak writes, “**may influence the future itself, the social scientist may rewrite the history of the future.**”*

*From this perspective, the study, evaluation, and formulation of images of the future **may allow the social scientist — i.e., ‘the futurist’— to become a better participant in the steering of human cultures towards better futures.***

So, he contends that the scientist, the futurist—whatever you choose to call him—should not resign to the incomplete act of merely recording, cataloging, diagnosing, and other such base things, but rather should directly *participate* in ‘rewriting the history of the future’ itself. Historians, therefore, should not merely study history, but rather project their studies onto the future, in order to affect the changes they want to see.

It seems well-intentioned enough—there’s nothing wrong with that, is there?

But it begs the question: why is the pharisaical intelligentsia class, which makes up academia and the cultists of ‘Scientism’, always so keen on *steering* humanity towards some greater good, in their vision? Time and time again, we see in the ever-constricting globalist paradigm of centralized governance, the ruling class invariably taking on that mantle of belief: that they are sole stewards of that sacred manifest, for what is best and what is *right* for humanity at large.

Camacho goes on to scribe:

*At its most basic level, as Lockton and Candy explain, compelling images of desirable futures may “**inspire people to work towards making those visions reality — to fulfill the prophecy.**” Of course, this idea is not strange for people working in the futures field and, to a great extent, coincides with Polak’s understanding of “influence-optimism.” Moreover, **it may be said to be the working conviction of many ‘futures’ practitioners at least since the field started to swerve away from its predictive ambition. The best way to predict the future, we are fond to say, is to create it.***

So what he implies is that, the entire *field* of ‘futurism’ has swerved away from merely a predictive study to that of actual *participation* in the creation of the future itself.



But from whence sprouts such hubris and conceit, that gives people the idea that they are deserving or worthy of the right to determine the future for everyone else? There are myriad possibilities, one supposes. For instance, some might view it as a danger to let the future ‘fall as it may’, and that a sort of entropic goulash would ensue without the direct intervention of the benign ‘saviors’—these intrepid futurist visionaries.

Others, perhaps, may be coming from a variety of psychosocial pathologies—perhaps a secret ego-driven lust for the power of commanding the lives of so many unwitting people.

In many ways, these psychological slants reek of the ‘myth of progress’ mentioned in a previous article. Namely, that our ruling class, for the past several hundred years, has operated under the principle topos that human destiny is inherently tied in with some vague notion of ‘progressing’ ever-toward something ‘better’, and that we should all be inclined to perpetually work towards this mythical ideal, no matter the fact that most of us cannot even conceive of *where* we’re progressing *to*, exactly, or *why*.

In many ways, this myth of progress has been the product of mercantilism and later capitalism and consumerism, brought on most headily by the industrial revolution and proletarianization of the common masses.

Nick Land’s theory of *Accelerationism*, for instance, as explained in the following video, traces the steps by which the consumerist impulse inherent in capitalism begets a sort of cultural egregore with a life of its own, leading to a self-perpetuating feedback loop.

What starts off as, for example, companies creating products (supply) to fill a particular, already extant demand in society, eventually turns into a ‘tail wagging the dog’ scenario. Hyper-commercialized marketplaces outpace the organic ‘demand’ inherent in society, forcing them to manufacture a new type of demand themselves, for which they naturally are the ready suppliers.

A simpler way of understanding it is: in an oversaturated, hyper-commercialized economy, for corporations to continue the endless growth which is intrinsic to the ‘myth of progress’ model, they can no longer rely on simply ferreting out natural demands for new products from the populace, particularly when supply is already neck and neck with demand in an oversaturated market. They must instead conjure the demand themselves from thin air, by *making* the populace repine for something that hasn’t even been invented yet. This is done by conditioning them to a new *need*—then conveniently offering the elixir.

One real life example of this is, for instance, hiring influencers and cultural ‘taste-makers’ to manufacture and engineer some new ersatz viral ‘movement’ or cultural trend, which creates an identifiable cultural brand that can subsequently be ‘packaged, produced, and sold’ (commodified) for monetary profit.

Other, more devious modern iterations are the Co-Vax and transgenderism movements, which were very recent contrivances that are now global-scale moneymakers.

The public was conditioned and inured to sympathize with LGBT, followed by the transgenderism movement, over the course of the past decade. Now it has opened up entirely new business models.

The narrator also touches on ideas from Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism*, quoting Lasch with the idea that:

*“Mass industrialization requires the development of mass consumption. And these mass consumers will have to be trained to consume ever-more advanced versions of products.”*

Going off of what I mentioned before, he states that soon this process becomes more about ‘training consumers, more efficiently, to want your product’ rather than finding niche, already extant needs to fill in society.

*“At this point technology and capital are really only responding to each other, and the human consumer has been removed from the equation, except as something to be directed towards the consumption of the product. With the human now removed from the evolutionary cycle, producing and consuming things becomes increasingly abstract, as capital and technology are creating for their own sake instead of being driven by the needs of human flourishing.”*

He goes on to state that as this process accelerates, it leaves the real human needs further and further behind. And we can see that happening today all around us. As these completely manufactured, contrived, and engineered movements sprout up endlessly around us, with ever-increasing celerity, stoked by faceless, human-less, astroturfing megacorps, we find the indelible needs of society—of real live humans themselves—being thrown by the wayside, ignored and utterly forgotten. Have you looked

at Kensington, Philadelphia lately?



The loops progress exponentially until the human is no longer a privileged customer, but rather merely a cog, a means to an end of the digital ticker-counting of endless expansion, not dissimilar to that referenced in my [Dead Internet article](#).

For corporations, though, the motives and incentives are easy for us to understand and process. They are straightforward: monetary gain, profit.

But what could possibly be the motive for so many of the intelligentsia and ruling class to ineluctably yearn for the right to steer humanity's course to their vision? In many cases, profit likely does align with their motive. But in others, it appears to be something inherent, a strain embedded in their psyche like a form of Dunning-Kruger, making them impervious to the second-guessing self-awareness which would stint many of us with red warning signals.

But most of us actuate towards some form of greater change in the world, in our daily lives. Some of us write blogs about geopolitical issues like the Ukrainian war, for instance, hoping with our actions that one side or the other wins, and a cascade of global change ramifies outward from that. We actively strive to change the future; and if given more power to do so, many would grab at the chance.

I would argue, however, that these are *localized* changes. To seek a change in one small locus of the world is not the same as steering all of society towards one uniform, overriding schema. To wit, militating towards Russia's victory in the Ukrainian war does not equate to impelling the world to adopt the Russian way of life.

But people like these futurists, whether innocuously, whether good-naturedly and well-intentioned or not, seek the 'betterment' of *all* society, and in their own solitary, insulated vision of what such betterment could entail.

In his article, Camacho further expounds that people form hyperstitious feedback loops based on latent fears, stating:

This is a worrying realization. Especially considering the current moment, full as it is with clear and present threats such as **growing inequality, xenophobia, and an unprecedented climate emergency**. If Polak was worried about a nihilistic turn in our imagination of the future, he would be terrified by our generalized cultural incapacity to imagine futures other than collapse.

Not surprisingly, our culture is starting to give birth to more and more calls to imagine positive futures: from Arizona State University's project *Hieroglyph: Stories and Visions for a Better Future*, to a magazine such as The Verge publishing the collection *Better Worlds*, all the way up to the emergence of a science fiction genres such as *solarpunk* and *hopepunk*. **What can we add to these developments, as futurists, from the standpoint of a *hyperstitious* understanding of images of the future?**

So firstly, the base topos from which the argument operates is established, which is that of the leftist, progressive paradigm and vision of society; in short, a narrow and insular view from one set of socio-political values.

He also states outright: ***"An important question emerges at this point: Can we, as futurists, intervene and perhaps even cultivate these hyperstitious processes?"***

Here again, we have the elevated academia and intelligentsia class, calling for direct 'intervention' into society's perceived ails, all from within one narrow perspective; one that presupposes that society as a whole not only agrees with the narrative, but more critically, the prescribed treatment.



Now, this isn't an argument for left versus right. The point is that, no one, no matter their denomination should assume on principle that the rest of society wants to be brought into their tinted vision of the future.

Surely, some might argue, there are at least some *universal* ideals, that everyone can agree on, which we as a whole can safely 'push toward'? Perhaps things like health and wellbeing for all, longer life, et cetera?

But the problem arises from the methods by which to actualize such ideals. We all know that those on the cultural left will have vastly differing interpretations of what methods are acceptable, to 'strive' towards betterment of human health.

After all, one need only to look at the diametric divisiveness which marked governmental Covid response measures around the world. One subset of humanity considered it perfectly acceptable to forcibly inoculate, mask, restrict, bind, kidnap, mock, dox, deplatform, and even cruelly refuse medical treatment to the *other* side.

In light of that, why would anyone ever believe that people could holistically come to terms on even the most basic and seemingly self-evident of societal issues?

But let's illuminate the point a little further:

First of all, we need to find ways to disarm or defuse those images of the future that may be operating *hyperstitionally*, specifically the negative ones, that is, those that operate through panic and other negative *affects*. How may we, as futurists, better counteract and defuse those images of the future — such as the belief in a new economic recession or the widespread automation panic — that are currently becoming self-fulfilling prophecies?

Second, and most importantly, we need to find ways to cultivate and grow *hyperstitions* that are based on positive images of the future. How?

The "need to disarm" hyperstitious conjurations which one *perceives* as 'negative' is heavily redolent of 'censorship' to me. To make this 'utopian future' we need to simply excise, snip, truncate, and elide those pesky little 'wrong thoughts' of the class we'll pin the blame on? It all has the air of a sanitized Twitter 'Trust and Safety' board meeting, pre-Elon Musk.

After all, how does one negate those dangerously pesky 'images of the future', such as 'a belief in a new economic recession or widespread automation panic', apart from simply making sure that people aren't able to verbalize such sentiments on social media and elsewhere? And how might one do that?

We all know the answer.





The techno-pharisees know what's good for our future.

Ultimately, there is a bizarre relationship between the academics and futurists of the intelligentsia rabble, and the future they so restlessly aspire to instantiate. It is almost reminiscent of that nervous tick some people have, where, in the absence of having something to say, they mindlessly gabble on to fill the space, the dreaded silence of the abyss.

All of us have likely done it, and the tendency resides to a greater or lesser extent in most people. Maybe the human mind is cybernetically wired to resist such inconvenient ellipses of space and time, programmed to always fill the void with something, lest it swallow us whole.

Is this need, this undying urge, in humans to constantly author the future for everyone else besides themselves, related to that atavistic trait? Or can it be written off as the mere product of simple egomania? It is hard to tell, but one thing that is certain, is the future should not belong solely to a radical caste of progressive techno-pharisees. Create your weird hyper-egalitarian Utopias in cyberspace, digitally picket it off, and enjoy to your heart's content.

by Simplicius The Thinker

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